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ABSTRACT

Some of the problems involved in teaching students admitted to colleges under open enrollment programs are the topic of this conference report. These students often enter college with the goal of getting a degree, but are not prepared for the kinds of study required in order to earn that degree. Reading skills are a major area in which such students are inadequately prepared for college. They have not acquired necessary skills, but resent drill and class exercise instructional techniques to acquire them. Perhaps more than at earlier ages, these students need instruction in reading skills which is goal-oriented and directly tied to their present courses of study so that reading instruction and course work can be integrated for maximum success. Attention should be focused on guiding and stimulating the whole student and not solely upon subject matter and materials. References are included. (MS)

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THE IMPACT OF TODAY'S STUDENTS UPON COLLEGE PROGRAMS IN READING

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The "open admissions" policy set forth by law in several states and practiced by colleges and universities throughout the United States guarantees to all high school graduates, irrespective of previous attainment, enrollment in a state college of his choice. New York City alone will spend millions of dollars not only for extra faculty and facilities but for remedial, compensatory, counseling, and instructional services designed to aid students to remain in the university until graduation. Furthermore, studies indicate that approximately one-third of all entering freshmen need to develop basic skills in reading so that they can meet minimal requirements for college study. The whole theory of open admissions and compensatory education is being challenged by many educators, governmental leaders, and taxpayers. In spite of this opposition, inadequately prepared young men and women are now enrolled in our colleges and universities, and we are being required to meet their reading needs. This paper

will set forth some of the problems encountered in teaching students to read at the college level and some means of dealing with these problems. The impact of today's students cannot be ignored.

Meeting needs of students

Many students enrolling in university classes are reading at the sixth grade level and below. Their speaking, writing, listening, and reading vocabularies are limited, and they have difficulty in securing meaning from class lectures and textbook reading. There has been little experiential background to prepare them for the concepts expressed by teachers and writers in the academic world. In fact, "going to college" is so foreign to some of these students that they have trouble in registration and in meeting flexible class schedules. Many are lost in a strange and hostile land. In general, these students need stimulation, information, and guidance. They need aid and instruction when and where it is needed for under these conditions they can appreciate the value of the assistance provided for them. The goal-oriented approach is essential in working with these students for the value of any instruction to them is dependent upon their immediate needs. In fact, they do not want to improve their basic skills in reading unless such attainments result in better grades in the university earned with an economy of time and effort. These students want a degree from the university and are not concerned with "getting an education" for that is too vague and indefinite. Some of these individuals have pointed out that much of their instruction in reading has been unrelated to their goals and that it has been worthless to them. Surely, it is obvious that the needs of the students, as they identify them, must be met if we are to continue an open admissions policy.

Specific reading needs

A study of several thousand students on the campus of Western Michigan

University indicates that certain learning skills are necessary for successful academic achievement. These are:

* Learning to identify main ideas
* Learning to read for a purpose
* Learning to make ideas one's own
* Learning to make the most of words
* Learning what to accept and what to reject
* Learning how to skim a textbook effectively
* Learning to concentrate
* Learning to read different kinds of literature
* Learning to read in the field of mathematics
* Learning to read in the field of science
* Learning to read in the social studies
* Learning to read creatively

Most of these students are not interested in the application of phonics, structural analysis, and contextual clues unless they see that these approaches to word meaning can be useful to them. This is "old stuff," they report, and are immediately "turned off." Skill-drill materials, practice exercises, and assignments are treated with disgust and in many instances ignored. Students ask, "Can't you show me how to read the books I have to read in my regular classes?" They need help in achieving their goals. In fact, they need facilitators rather than dispensers of information.

Personality needs of students

Conferences with students enrolled in college reading classes and studies of their academic background indicate that many have made no vocational choice and that in our world there is little else for them to do except to "go to

college." Here they assume that success will be as easy to attain as in the secondary schools where in spite of frequent absences, low test scores, and low marks they were promoted from grade to grade irrespective of attainment. These concepts developed over a period of several years are difficult to eradicate. Observations and individual studies suggest that many students needing special educational services care little about overcoming their deficiencies. It appears that some of these individuals have not learned to do the things that need to be done, when they need to be done whether they want to do them or not. Emotional maturity is a characteristic which many modern college students do not possess.

A large number of students requiring remedial and compensatory services have frustrations, worries, and fears which seriously interfere with their ability to concentrate. Life on our college campuses is not always conducive to the development of adequate study habits. Many students have not learned to adjust successfully to the "new freedoms." Feelings of frustration and guilt often prevent effective reading and study. Political, economic, and social unrest along with confrontations and massive demonstrations fail to provide a background for thoughtful reading and study. For some personalities these disturbances retard and prevent academic achievement.

Some means to an end

The greatest impact of today's students upon college reading programs is the change in the role of the reading teacher. If colleges are to exist for all who wish to enter, overcrowding will be common in all classes designed for compensatory instruction, especially reading. Consequently, the one teacher to a classroom concept will be outdated. In fact, team teaching will become a necessity. This instructional procedure involves two teachers equally prepared

who understand the reading needs of their students and who work together simultaneously in the application of methods and the use of materials to accomplish a well designed objective. Frequently, one instructor will interrupt the other in order to reinforce a point of view or to illustrate a principle being set forth. At times there will be a "give and take" of conflicting ideas so as to enlist the support of students on one side or the other of the "apparent" conflict of positions. In this situation, students are stimulated and "turned on" so as to develop and express ideas of their own. To prove their point some of the students consult reference materials and attain real status by convincing one member of the team that he was in error. Other students are "quickened," and critical thinking actually takes place.

Team teaching can facilitate the use of flexible grouping in reading classes at the university level. Students can be grouped temporarily from one to two class periods in order to accomplish a specific objective. For example, a team working with a class of 32 students can demonstrate reading for main ideas in a chapter and vocabulary building at the same time. One group of 12 students would be concerned in learning how to identify main ideas in a chapter and another group of 20 students would be shown how to add words which have been selected from their various textbooks to their vocabulary. It is obvious that such grouping procedures are dependent upon the awareness of the instructors of the students and their needs. Class lectures should be provided chiefly at the request of students.

Team teaching makes possible the goal-oriented approach to instruction in reading. As the student tries to accomplish his objectives with his books, he experiences difficulty and it is at this time and in this situation that he needs specific instruction. Today's student sees little value for instruction before the need for it develops. For him and at this time it is irrelevant and inconse-

quential. In the goal-oriented approach the function of the teacher is to stimulate, when necessary to inform, and in all situations to guide. Attention must be focused upon the whole individual and his needs and not upon subject matter, materials, and reading skills per se. Teaching about reading can be done away with entirely.

Remedial reading, a thing of the past

Such terms as remedial reading and compensatory instruction can be and should be avoided. Today's students abhor their connotation and their denotation is lost in a maze of ambiguity. They are like the term hardware which can mean anything from a tenpenny nail to a lawn mower. Furthermore, developmental and remedial reading have much in common for seldom does any individual learn completely and thoroughly at the first presentation. Instead of using the odious expressions, remedial and corrective reading, why not talk about meeting the needs of the individual while and as he uses his books to accomplish his objectives on the campus? Today's student is not interested in reading as a subject such as mathematics, political science, and the social studies. In some instances programs such as Upward Bound give students an unrealistic concept of themselves, their activities and expectations. They are encouraged to expect an adjustment curriculum which frequently is long delayed and in other circumstances is never made available. Failure to secure such aid and guidance leads many students to discouragement, frustration, and to acts of hostility. This situation is intensified by the attitude that an education is a right, not a privilege nor an opportunity. In dealing with these students the instructor must create interest and not stand passively by and wait for it to develop.

Importance of concept development

Students of today, who have limited ability in reading, possess a knowledge

of words and their meanings which is not appreciated or even understood by many of their instructors. This jargon of the youth, however, does not help him in his identification, interpretation, and evaluation of the concepts expressed in his textbooks and presented to him in class lectures. For the more mature student, this need soon becomes apparent and he is apt to seek help. If he is to read and listen effectively, a knowledge of the unknown concept is essential. He must understand the language of books and the academic community. This is relevant.

The intelligent student in the upper ranges of these classes learns to use concepts expressed in the form of words, in sentences, and in paragraphs when he makes up his mind that it is necessary for him to do so. He can do this by expressing his ideas in speech and in writing. Later he can listen to and read the ideas expressed by others. Now if his instructors have "stirred him up," "turned him on," and really stimulated him, he will have ideas to express, his ideas. His teachers can now guide him so as to bring about effective expression. By the total process of speaking, writing, listening, and reading, concepts can be born. The good therapist with his knowledge of all the tools of his trade can become an excellent obstetrician who is concerned with the birth of one child at a time.

If concepts are to be developed in the various subject matter areas, tutors provided by the departments can cooperate and work with the reading therapist. This reading specialist now becomes a consultant and a teacher of tutors. It is the responsibility of these subject matter specialists to provide experiential background, to develop concepts essential to work in the department, and to aid the students in building vocabularies required in their reading and listening. This will be a new function for the teacher of students enrolled in reading improvement courses.

Not all college teachers can work successfully with disadvantaged students. Some lack patience and are interested in other activities. Others are content to talk about reading and give out chunks of irrelevant subject matter. Many are imperceptive and fail to see with the "third eye" and hear with the "third ear." Such faculty members should be prepared and willing to find other teaching positions.

Summary

This paper has pointed out and discussed some of the impacts of modern students upon the work in reading at the college level. The goal-oriented approach has been stressed. In this process an emphasis has been placed upon stimulation and guidance. Team teaching carried on by individuals who are dedicated to the task of meeting the needs of individual students has been recommended. The most drastic change is in the role of the reading teacher who becomes a consultant and helps representatives from the content fields develop reading skills in their subject matter areas. He focuses attention upon the whole student and not upon reading, subject matter, and materials. He no longer works in a vacuum but recognizes the need of counselors and cooperation with other members of the faculty. With his students he becomes a facilitator of their activities and not an impersonal storehouse of irrelevant materials.

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